



ASLEF

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JOURNAL
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Why the railway – and the country – needs a Labour government



MICK WHELAN: Let's put the wheels and steel back together

SIMON WELLER: Join us for the big march on 18 October

ASLEF at the TUC in Liverpool, the Labour Party in Manchester
and the International Transport Workers' Federation in Sofia

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drivers' union

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Working for you

SINCE I last spoke in this column it has been a hectic period with the emphasis on the political issues that affect not only our industry but our day to day life. We have had the result of the political fund ballot – which was a resounding yes – with, again, a significant turnout that allows ASLEF to continue campaigning on your behalf and I want to thank all who participated.

The momentous decision in Scotland on the future shape of the UK has, I believe, changed the dynamics of political debate for the greater good and shown that when there is a real decision to be made people will engage. I think it will also invigorate the debate over the voting age.

As you will see elsewhere in the *Journal* we had a very active delegation to the TUC; every delegate contributed in a variety of debates to form policy for a fairer, more protected society that delivers for workers and their families.

We then sent a delegation to the Labour Party conference where we promoted the interests of our industry and those issues that impact on our futures, and those of our loved ones, from the NHS to workplace protection and a myriad of other issues that will be reported on more fully in due course.

I note with concern an increased number of fatalities in recent weeks and other incidents that directly impact on drivers and my thoughts are with them, and the families of those involved, at this difficult time.

The announcement of 24 hour running on the tube will stimulate activity around resourcing and the terms and conditions of our members – and we shall keep you updated.

After the passing of Bob Crow the RMT have elected their new general secretary, Mick Cash, and I take this opportunity to wish him all the best for the future.

Finally, Bob Hodson, former Virgin company council chair and a long-time friend and personal inspiration, has passed away far too soon. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

Yours fraternally

Mick Whelan, general secretary



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Join us at the big demo

SIMON WELLER, ASLEF's national organiser, is urging every branch to organise in support of the TUC's Britain Needs a Pay Rise march and rally in London on Saturday 18 October. 'This demonstration deserves massive support,' said Simon, who also sits on the TUC's general council. 'The campaign slogan seems simple, but it defines an approach to the economy that can make this country a much better place for all working people.'

Because getting money back into people's pockets is essential for a proper, and sustained, economic recovery. 'Bankers operating as if they were playing at a casino, on credit, led to the spending boom that caused the financial crisis,' said Simon. 'People need money to spend to increase demand and boost the whole economy. We don't want credit – we need money in our pockets.'

The TUC has four demands: a properly enforced minimum wage; higher wages for employers who can afford to pay more (it's supposed to be a minimum, not a maximum); a commitment to a living wage rather than the minimum wage; and a crackdown on



The banner man held the banner high: join Mick and Simon on Saturday 18 October

excessive executive pay which only leads to greater inequality and excessive financial risk taking in the markets.

Simon says this is not simply a rally for the low paid. 'It calls for a whole new economic approach,' he says. 'It affects us all. Because low wages at the bottom of the scale work their way up to better paid workers. Lower industry norms at the bottom are used by employers to reduce higher paid staff. They say "we all have



to make sacrifices" but make a perverse inverted case for equality where working people suffer but senior managers, and the very rich, do not.

'Working people have taken the brunt of the economic crisis since this government took power. That is what we have to change. We need to fight back against the government's ideologically motivated attack on workers' wages, in the private and public sectors. That's why I hope masses of ASLEF members will be marching with Mick and me, behind our union banners, in London on 18 October.'

Ten years of Hope



Mick, with Kevin Maguire of the Daily Mirror, at a Hope Not Hate meeting at the Labour Party conference in Brighton last year

Hope Not Hate, the anti-racist, anti-fascist organisation, is ten years old this year and in the process of producing a book documenting its campaign over the decade. Director Nick Knowles asked for a message from ASLEF

for inclusion and Mick Whelan, general secretary, said: 'The phrase "hope not hate" is much more than a slogan. It's not one of those meaningless catchphrases advertising agencies dream up. It's a statement of an ideal,

of the beliefs that hold together trade unions and the left. Because without hope there is no motivation to act collectively for the things that make humans civilized, the foremost of which is the belief that discrimination on the basis of race or gender is utterly unacceptable. Hate is the result of ignorance and Hope Not Hate works to eliminate the ugly, mindless tribalism that leads to the irrational fear of differences, rather than an appreciation of the richness and variety of different cultures.

'I am proud that ASLEF has been, and will remain, one of your leading supporters.' Mick congratulated the campaign on its work, but looks forward to the day it will not need to exist.



Brian Corbett, District 7 Organiser, addressed a crowd of 100,000 who marched through London, past the BBC in Portland Place past the US embassy in Grosvenor Square to a rally in Hyde Park, on Saturday 9 August to protest at the failure of the British and American governments to condemn the actions of Israel in Gaza. The ASLEF officer shared the platform with Sarah Colborne, director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Diane Abbott, Labour MP for Hackney North & Stoke Newington, Rushanara Ali, Labour MP for Bethnal Green & Bow, the activist Tariq Ali, *Guardian* columnist Seamus Milne, and journalist and author Owen Jones.



QUOTE...

'Ticket prices on the railways today are a major concern for the travelling public.' – **Mark Carne**, chief executive, Network Rail

...UNQUOTE

The new executive committee member for District 3 (replacing Alan Donnelly, who has stepped down after 13 years, ten of them as president) is Andrew Hourigan (605 votes) who beat Gary Boyle (218). Turnout was 42.0%.



A railway fit for the 21st century

ASLEF activists were joined by Action for Rail campaigners and members of the other rail unions – the RMT, TSSA and Unite – at more than 60 stations up and down the country on the day that the rate of inflation, used to calculate the annual rise in regulated rail fares, was announced.

Mick Whelan, general secretary, was interviewed live on Sky News and LBC before joining colleagues to talk to passengers and hand out postcards calling for the railways to be brought into public ownership. Privatisation costs the taxpayer more than £1 billion each year, while fares could be slashed by 18% under public ownership.

'Rail privatisation has failed,' said Mick. 'It's a flawed business model not delivering for the people who work in it, the people who use it, and the people who depend on it. We need a modern, integrated railway fit for the 21st century and



Mick makes his point with Action for Rail at King's Cross

that means a publicly-accountable, publicly-controlled, publicly-owned British railway.'

Mick welcomed the renationalisation, on 1 September, of Network Rail. Although the government has carefully avoided the 'n' word, describing it as a 'statistical decision' to make NR a 'public sector organisation'.

'Semantics notwithstanding, we're delighted that Network Rail has been brought back onto the books as a public body,' said Mick. 'It's great that half of our railway system – the steel if not the wheels – are back in public ownership. And, if I can be permitted a smile, isn't it ironic that such a big chunk of the railway has been renationalised by a Tory government?'

PARTY POLITICAL STUNT

Frances O'Grady, general secretary of the TUC, spoke out after Bruce Carr, the QC leading a review set up by the Prime Minister to look at the law governing industrial disputes, decided not to make any recommendations 'in a progressively politicised environment in the run up to the general election'.

She said: 'Bruce Carr has been cynically used by the government in a party political stunt for the Conservative Party. He is right to recognise this politicisation and I am not surprised at his decision not to make any recommendations and to simply review the few submissions sent to him.'

TORY U-TURN ON CATTLE TRUCKS

Passengers protested after the Conservatives dumped one of their flagship pledges – to scrap the hated Pacer trains – on Northern Rail routes. Commuters complain that Pacers – condemned as 'cattle trucks' by passenger groups – are dirty, cold, noisy, uncomfortable and 'unfit for purpose'. They were due to be replaced in 2016 but the DfT now says the Pacers – originally introduced as a stop-gap measure in the 1980s, and which consist of a bus body mounted on a freight wagon chassis, with a diesel engine slung underneath – may be 'modernised' to keep them running for another decade.

500 CLUB: R Fisher, with number 180, won the September draw, scooping the RMS prize money jackpot of £368.

Off the rails



GRAEME CRAIG, head of commercial development at TfL, wants to roll out click-and-collect services across the Tube at the expense of the Underground's 'traditional tat'. He says: 'Old Street exemplified the worst of our retail offer but we spent £600,000 improving lighting and signage. A year ago French Connection wouldn't have been seen dead at Old Street, now it's opening a store there. We have every supermarket in Britain beating a path to our door. Now he has Baker Street – no writ, Sherlock – in his sights. 'You come out the front and you've got tat all the way along. Why not have high quality food and drink stores?'



ED SMITH, who played for Kent and Middlesex and is now part of the BBC's *Test Match Special* commentary team, thinking about politics, as much as sport, looks for strategic insight – 'despite the claims of Clausewitz and Sun Tzu' – to Mike Tyson. 'Everyone has a plan,' mused the former heavyweight boxing champ. 'Until they get punched in the mouth...'



MARZ COLOMBINI, EC member for District 1, posted his ice bucket challenge footage on the worldwide web. Marz, looking as if he's cooling down rather than suffering for his heart, tells his followers on Facebook he isn't asking for donations and gives it to them straight: 'If you want to make a difference, join a trade union.'

OVIDIU-FLORIN ADIR has been fined for selling tissues to passengers travelling between Wimbledon and Raynes Park. The 27-year-old would-be entrepreneur contravened a railway bylaw by selling goods on a train without the written permission of the railway operator. Magistrates ordered him to cough up £155 – made up of a £50 fine, £20 victim surcharge and £85 costs – a sum that South West Trains says is, er, not to be sneezed at...

PAUL ROUTLEDGE of the *Daily Mirror*, in a glorious piece about trainspotting as a kid, recalls how 'a whole new world opened up' on a low stone wall 'at the bottom of our street, Railway Terrace' with a 'cavalcade of Jubilees, Black Fives, Eight Freights, Jintys, Dub Dees, Standard Nines, Crabs and Four Fs with the occasional Royal Scot or Patriot'.

ANDY BOTHAM, East Midlands company council rep and Labour's candidate for Derbyshire Dales, has a new sideline. Chicken racing. His bird, Save the NHS, set a new course record of 3.8 seconds at the 25th World Hen Racing Championships at the Barley Mow in Bonsall in August.

THE SWIVEL-EYED second amendment hardliners of the National Rifle Association – the ones Robin Williams dryly described as defending 'the right to bear arms, the right to arm bears, whatever' – didn't blink when a nine-year-old girl shot dead her instructor with an Uzi submachine gun at the delightfully named Bullets & Burgers gun range in Arizona. Next day the NRA was still tweeting: '7 ways children can have fun at a shooting range.'

Let's put the wheels and the steel back together

Mick Whelan has called for a step change in political and practical thinking on transport to deliver a better railway for Britain.

Speaking at a *Question Time*-style Action for Rail fringe – called Can Labour Deliver Radical Rail Reform? – on Tuesday night, Mick said: 'We need legislation that allows us to run our own trains. We need a step change to get to where we want to be. And we need to put the wheels and the steel back together to build a new model railway, fit for the 21st century, here in Britain.'

Mick was joined on the platform by Manuel Cortes, general secretary of the TSSA; Mick Cash, acting general secretary of the RMT; Diana

Holland, assistant general secretary of Unite; Ian Taylor, director of the pressure group Transport for Quality of Life; and Matt Dykes, senior policy officer, public services, at the TUC.

Manuel Cortes said: 'Labour says it wants a review but what's the point of reviewing something that we all know doesn't work? Polls show that public ownership is a vote winner and we need a commitment from Labour that they will do the right thing.'

Ian Taylor – who said the figures showed that fares could be slashed by up to 40% if the railway was in public, rather than private, hands – argued: 'The obstacles to public ownership are political, not practical. It's political cowardice,



Manuel, Mick, Matt, Diana, Ian and Mick Cash at the AfR meeting on the TUC fringe

not a practical problem.'

And Diana Holland held out a vision – if the Tories get back in next year – of rail following buses in a race to the bottom. 'It's slash and burn, everyone for themselves. We need a properly integrated transport system with central control.'

Mick Cash argued that part of the problem – for Ed Miliband and for the rail industry in Britain – is Ed Balls, the Shadow Chancellor. 'Getting rid of Maria Eagle to keep Ed Balls onside was a mistake.'

QUOTE...

'Employment does much more than provide the means to support workers and their families; it is essential to personal fulfilment and human dignity. Part of that dignity is being paid a living wage.' – **Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England**

...UNQUOTE

'That crew of Liverpool hard cases had in them the right stuff,' wrote Joseph Conrad in *Youth*. 'It's my experience they always have. It is the sea that gives it – the vastness, the loneliness surrounding their dark stolid souls.'



Simon Weller, speaking from the podium on Tuesday morning for ASLEF's motion on Alternatives to Austerity, said: 'The austerity agenda was always an excuse for the Tories and their Lib Dem pals to give to their rich friends while attacking the rights of working people. After four years of this government, and its vicious policies, austerity is really beginning to bite – and to damage Britain. George Osborne's economic recovery is like the emperor's new clothes. Growth might appear to be 0.1% on paper but that means nothing to

workers and their families in Bristol or Newcastle who are struggling to pay the rent and feed their kids. A recovery based on a housing bubble, which is liable to burst at any time, and consumer spending fuelled by credit, is a house of cards waiting to come tumbling down.'

Welcome to my nightmare

Alan Donnelly, speaking from the podium on Tuesday for our motion about Vulnerable Young Workers, told congress: 'Economic recovery is an academic concept for the majority of workers, particularly young workers, who are trapped in a nightmare world of job insecurity, zero hours contracts and agency work, burdened by growing personal debt, often in the grip of unscrupulous money lenders, and with limited access to apprenticeships or further educational opportunities. That is the world that David Cameron and Nick Clegg have created for our young people with their coalition government.'

'My love of New York is something to do with Liverpool,' said John Lennon. 'There is the same energy in both cities.'

WHOOPS! THERE GOES THE FRONT PAGE

When it was announced on Monday morning that William and Kate, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, are expecting another child, 'a little brother or sister for baby George,' Alan Jones of the Press Association, doyen of industrial correspondents, dryly announced to the other hacks in the media room, all with an eye on the front pages and news bulletins to come: 'Well, that's it. We might as well pack up and go home.' In fact it was the referendum in Scotland, as well as the royal pregnancy, which pushed the TUC down the news agenda.



Early birds Marz Colombini and Simon Weller were outside Liverpool Lime Street station at eight o'clock on Monday morning handing out postcards to



passengers condemning new proposals from Northern Rail.

QUOTE...

'Trade unionism, at its heart, is about friendship between working people.' – **Frances O'Grady, general secretary, TUC**

...UNQUOTE

It's not the leaving of Liverpool that grieves me

ASLEF sent five delegates – Mick Whelan, general secretary; Simon Weller, national organiser; Alan Donnelly, EC president; Hussein Ezzedine from Edinburgh No 1; and Deborah Reay of Northern Line North – to the 146th Trades Union Congress at the BT convention centre, next to the Echo Arena, in King's Dock, Liverpool, from Sunday 7 to Wednesday 10 September. Executive committee members Dave Calfe and Marz Colombini and district organiser Colin Smith attended as visitors.

Delegates from 53 unions, representing 5,786,734 members, gathered on Merseyside for the parliament of the trade union movement. Debates on jobs, growth, and fair

Congratulations to Simon Weller who was re-elected to the general council of the TUC. He polled 196,000 votes.

FOX IN CHARGE OF THE HEN HOUSE

Mick Whelan, speaking in the transport debate on Tuesday afternoon, told congress: 'The Rail Delivery Group is like the fox looking after the hen house. The train operating companies don't look after the interests of passengers, or taxpayers, or those who work on the railway. They only look after the interests of their shareholders.'

CITY BUILT ON SLAVES

Liverpool was a city built, in the 18th century, on the back of the slave trade. It overtook Bristol and London to become, as the International Slavery Museum, part of the Merseyside Maritime Museum on Albert Dock, admits in its permanent exhibition, 'the capital of the transatlantic slave trade.' William Matthews, writing in 1794, believed: 'The people of Liverpool, in their indiscriminate rage for commerce and getting money at all events, have nearly engrossed the trade.'

More than 1.5 million Africans were moved, in manacles and as cargo, on ships owned by Liverpool's merchant adventurers, to the Americas. 'They will remember that we were sold, but not that we were strong,' said William Prescott, a former slave, in 1937. 'They will remember that we were bought, but not that we were brave.'

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

The Musicians' Union dug up some old records to discover that the fab four – at that time John Lennon (guitar), James Paul McCartney (guitar), George Harrison (guitar) and Peter Best (drums) – all joined Liverpool branch on 1 August 1962.

Chuka Umunna, Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and Labour MP for Streatham, speaking to congress on Monday afternoon, said: 'I am a proud trade union member. Out of choice and out of conviction.'



Ezzy, Simon, Debbie, Mick, Alan and Marz wait for a ferry across the Mersey

pay, ahead of the party political conferences, helped set the political agenda for Michaelmas term.

As well as the motions on the conference floor, and the plethora of fringe meetings every lunchtime and evening, congress was an opportunity for ASLEF reps to meet activists from other unions who face similar challenges in different fields and who are doing the same job of representing their members and trying to make this country a better place in which to work and live.

CONGRESS: ZERO TIME FOR ZERO HOURS

Congress decided it had no time for zero hours contracts and voted to lobby the Labour Party, and the government, to abolish zero hours contracts except where expressly requested by a worker. Hussein Ezzedine, speaking for ASLEF on the motion on Sunday afternoon, said: 'Zero hours contracts, and the increased casualisation of labour, are a major threat to health and safety standards in many industries.'

A view endorsed at an ACAS fringe meeting on Monday, led by Brendan Barber, the former TUC general secretary who is now chair of ACAS; Anne Sharp, chief executive of ACAS; Sarah Veale, head of equality and employment rights at the TUC; and Kate Shoesmith, head of policy and public affairs at the Recruitment & Employment Confederation. The mood of the meeting – BECTU notwithstanding – was that zero hours contracts are not about flexibility, which employers often claim, but are, in reality, a one-way street which always runs in favour of the employer.

QUOTE...

'The Tories' definition of "fairness" is not to be found anywhere in the English dictionary.' – **Angela Eagle, Shadow Leader of the House of Commons and Labour MP for Wallasey**

...UNQUOTE

EQUAL TREATMENT

Debbie Reay, moving an ASLEF amendment on the pensions motion on Monday morning, told congress: 'We condemn this coalition government's refusal to ensure that equal marriage is truly equal by ensuring equality of provision for survivor benefits in occupational schemes. We will continue to fight to overturn laws that allow pensions to offer reduced benefits to same sex couples.'

FREE PALESTINE

Hussein Ezzedine spoke from the heart on Wednesday morning about the plight of the people in Gaza. Delegates were visibly moved by what Ezzy had to say, and the *Morning Star* was quick to pick up on his passionate speech to congress.

LEND ME A TENOR

ASLEF delegates networking in the Vines, a fine old Victorian public house in the shadow of the Adelphi hotel, did their best to maintain the fine old tradition of train drivers' karaoke on Sunday night. Debbie did *At Last* by Etta James, Simon tackled *Cool for Cats* by Squeeze, Steve Cavalier of Thompsons solicitors ventured a version of *Don't You Want Me* by the Human League and Ezzy and Alan knocked out a note perfect cover of The Proclaimers' *I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)*.

QUOTE...

'The general election in 2015 will be the most important election since 1945.' – **Mohammad Taj, president, TUC**

...UNQUOTE

The voice of opposition – and the voice of progress

MARK DANIELS of Barking main line and **PETER JAMES** of Sheffield Midland report from the ITF congress in Sofia

AN ASLEF delegation – including general secretary Mick Whelan, national organiser Simon Weller, executive committee member Howard Kaye, Elizabeth Cocks of the Women's Representative Committee, Peter James of Sheffield Midland branch and Mark Daniels of Barking main line – attended the 43rd congress of the International Transport Workers' Federation in Sofia, Bulgaria, in August. It was the biggest congress in the ITF's 118 year history, and included 1,719 participants from 372 trade unions in 114 countries.

Congress is the organisation's supreme decision making forum, at which affiliated unions set the agenda for the next four years, and elect its executive board, president, vice-presidents and



Simon Weller addresses the ITF congress on finance in Sofia
general secretary.

Sharon Burrow, ITUC president, set the tone when she said: 'We are the voice of opposition – but we are also the voice of progress.' A great speech from a great trade unionist. As the atmosphere became charged so did the cultural entertainment, including a performance from a famous folk singer and the Bulgarian Eurovision contestant!

Simon Weller was the keynote speaker on Leading Change in Unions and highlighted eloquently what is being done in our own trade union. We attended a three hour fringe on rail privatisation hosted by the Korean Railway Union. Simon and Elizabeth both made great



The ASLEF delegation (top) pose outside the Palace of Culture, known locally as the former politburo's old palace of fun, and (above) caught relaxing off duty

contributions to the debate with intelligent questions and observations. We also attended Violence Against Women and Elizabeth made a great contribution, asking the panel, chaired by Diana Holland from Unite, if they believed violence should not be perpetrated against anyone, irrespective of race, gender and sexual orientation.

Steve Cotton, who has been acting general secretary for the past two years, was elected GS of the ITF. He has been a good friend to ASLEF, was a guest speaker at our 2013 AAD in Edinburgh, and we wish him luck for the next four years.

● A full report on congress will appear in next month's *Journal*.

QUOTE...

'Alex Salmond looks like he'd sell you something out of a sports bag' – Andrew Maxwell at the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh
...UNQUOTE

Her only crime is a commitment to human rights



KATY PROCTOR, ASLEF's website editor and conference organiser, reports from Colombia

IN March 2012 general secretary Mick Whelan and District 5 Officer Nigel Gibson were at the gates of El Buen Pastor prison in Bogota to celebrate the release of Liliany Obando, a human rights activist who had suffered years of wrongful imprisonment. Today Liliany continues to be harassed and faces the constant threat of being returned to jail.

Liliany is an academic, trade unionist and political activist in a country where that puts you on the at risk list. She was imprisoned, without conviction, between 2008 and 2012, accused of links to FARC guerrillas, then sentenced to 70 months' house arrest, on

charges of rebellion. In August she was arrested again and had to fight for her house arrest to be reinstated.

Liliany does not present a danger to society. Her only crime is her commitment to human rights and a belief in social justice. She continues to be vocal about human rights abuses and it is no coincidence that her detention in August coincided with a day of protest she was involved in organising.

Mick Whelan, a vice-chair of Justice for Colombia, said: 'It's sickening that Colombia still has hundreds of political prisoners jailed for opposing the regime, while paramilitary leaders enjoy impunity for the massacres they have committed. The determination of Colombians in their struggle for social justice is inspiring. We hope that the current peace



Mick watches Liliany walk to freedom

negotiations will be successful, but while Liliany and her comrades are persecuted and detained on trumped-up charges, talk of peace and justice is a sham. That's why we call on the Colombian government to build trust by guaranteeing the protection and rights of trade unionists, civil society activists and the political opposition.'

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The day the innocents died and the guilty got rewarded



The name of Aberfan was etched on the hearts and minds of a generation when a spoil tip from the Merthyr Valley colliery slid down onto the village school, killing 116 children and 28 adults. CHRIS PROCTOR remembers the disaster that cast a shadow over the country and the part train drivers played in the rescue

FORTY-EIGHT years ago this month, on 21 October 1966, the huge slag heap that shadowed Pantglas junior school near Merthyr Tydfil, saturated with water, began to move. Within minutes the little village school was enveloped in rock and shale and 116 children and 28 adults were buried alive.

The horror of the disaster touched the country. Large numbers of men and women rushed to the village to offer assistance. Former ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman recalls: 'I remember many train drivers from my depot at Cardiff Canton volunteering to help dig for the missing children and teachers. Every ASLEF branch in Wales raised collections and made donations to the Aberfan disaster fund. To be fair to BR managers in Cardiff, they continued to pay drivers when they were helping out at Aberfan.' Meetings of ASLEF members across the land stood in silence to commemorate the dead.

REPORT FOUND ROBENS GUILTY

The chairman of the National Coal Board in 1966 was Lord Alfred Robens, a former shop workers' union official who became MP for the mining constituency of Wansbeck after the war. Incredibly, on the evening of the slippage, he chose to go, not to south Wales, but to the University of Surrey to be installed as the university's Chancellor. He arrived at Aberfan two days after the disaster, announcing that it had been caused by 'natural unknown springs' beneath the tip.

It later emerged that the existence of these springs was common knowledge. And, in 1997, embargoed documents revealed more about Aberfan. One shows that the Charity Commission planned to insist that before any payment was made to bereaved parents, they had to prove they had been close to their children. Otherwise they might not be suffering mentally. The report of the Davies inquiry, published in August 1967, blamed the disaster entirely on the NCB's 'extreme negligence' and found Robens guilty of making misleading statements.

It is incredible that in 1969, just three years



Aberfan in 1966 and the memorial garden today



later, Barbara Castle selected this man to chair a committee on workplace health and safety. The subsequent Robens report led to the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974. At the core of the report was the belief that there was 'too much law' which Robens said led to apathy. His solution was 'self-regulation' – a finding that Neil Kinnock denounced in strident terms. 'To suggest that the law is the major cause of apathy is a distortion of reality. It is like saying the crutch has made the cripple.' And AJP Dalton declared that 'self regulation means no regulation'.

WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET

The tragedy at Aberfan, for which no one was punished, remains one of the most heartbreaking in the history of British industry. That the government subsequently appointed the man at the head of the Coal Board as an expert in safety remains beyond belief. Aberfan taught us bitter lessons we must remember and gave us painful memories we should never forget. Because to do so would be a terrible insult to the children and teachers who died needlessly 48 years ago.

THE PRICE OF COAL

*For two hundred years my people were miners
And dug in the mountains and valleys of Wales.
I grew to my manhood knowing their stories
And the price of the coal was the soul of these tales.*

*I knew of the fire and the fall and famine
I knew of the lockout and strike and the dole.
I knew of the anger sharpened by hunger
I knew of the price that was paid for the coal.*

*But brothers, believe me, I never saw equal
When Aberfan drowned in the slag and the slime,
For never before was the price paid in children
And a whole generation was killed in that crime.*

*If only, if only, so many are thinking
If only, if only, it needn't have been
These were the heroes who slaved but if only, if only –
Oh, the price of the coal was the dearest we've seen.*

*And people are kind and there's money in plenty
But giving is easy and losing is dear.
And all of the kindness can't comfort the aching
Oh, the price of the coal, it was priceless that year.*

Charlie Mayo



○ We featured **CHARLIE MAYO**, a former King's Cross driver living at Polperro in Cornwall, as a Key Worker in the *Journal* last year after the publication of his book *Ghosts of Steam*. Charlie, in the 1950s and '60s, was a young left activist 'less concerned with trains than with the men who drove them'. He was also a talented musician, prominent in the English folk revival along with the likes of Ewan MacColl, Ian Campbell and Martin Carthy. These are the lyrics of a song he wrote 48 years ago in response to the disaster at Aberfan. Sadly, Charlie passed away on 15 August this year, but these words of his are a fitting memorial to a talented comrade.

THINK PINK Conference was held this year in Manchester which, according to Ian Brown of the Stone Roses, has 'everything except a beach.' But delegates were disappointed that Labour's iconic red imagery was supplanted by curious 'rinky dink' pink signage, and on printed material by burgundy (although West Ham fan Howard Kaye preferred to call it claret). Labour Party press officers optimistically described the signage as an 'exciting new contemporary colourway' but stewards said they preferred traditional red to wishy-washy pink.

Agenda to inspire

TOSH McDONALD got conference off to a flying start for ASLEF with a barnstorming speech at the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy rally at Jury's Inn, just around the corner from Manchester central, on Sunday night. Speaking on a panel which included Kelvin Hopkins, Labour MP for Luton North, and Diane Abbott, Labour MP for Hackney North & Stoke Newington, Tosh brought a packed room to its feet with one of his famously inspiring calls to arms.

He said: 'We need radical policies – and a radical platform – to win the next general election. We need an agenda to inspire,

and to engage with, not just Labour Party members but all those voters who have left us.

'That's why ASLEF welcomes the promise to set up a workplace commission, which will lay the ground for positive reform of the labour market. This could strengthen trade unions and help us stand more strongly against the corporate power which has dominated this country for the last two or three decades.

'Because no less an authority than the IMF, that high priest of global capitalism, says: "Increasing the bargaining power of lower and middle income households is one of the surest ways to build sustainable growth and avoid

another economic crisis".

'We can't stick to the Tory spending limits and solve the cost of living crisis. Even the governor of the Bank of England says "the current fall in wages is the worst since the 1920s." Pay increases are less than half the rate of inflation – so living standards keep falling. Growth based on low paid jobs is empty growth. Labour needs an economic programme which ensures that everyone gets a fair share of the growing economy.'

Tosh also made a splash from the podium in the main hall. Keith Vaz, his party conference warm-up man, who likes to refer to the EC vice-president as Richard Branson, was again in the conference chair when, holding up a Justice for Colombia shirt, rather than wearing his Harley-Davidson tee, Tosh said: 'Just last summer 19 striking trade unionists were shot dead by the military to whom Britain supplies weapons and training. We must ensure that never again does a British government, particularly a British Labour government, provide these weapons or training to forces to murder those seeking social justice.'



Tosh makes his point to a tee in Old Testament prophet mode

PASSENGERS NOT PROFITS

Mary Creagh, the Shadow Transport Secretary, promised that the next Labour government will put 'passengers before profits'. Speaking in the plenary session on living standards and sustainability on Tuesday morning, she said: 'Ed Miliband's government will deliver the big change we need in transport. Big change to deliver our national infrastructure. Big change to tackle the cost of transport. Big change to make our roads safer.'

'When I'm asked what it's like being a woman in politics I always think of the Ginger Rogers line, "I do everything Fred Astaire does, but backwards and in high heels." We'll know when we have enough women in politics because no one will ask that question. Our politics can't be a man's world.' – **Gloria de Piero**, Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities and Labour MP for Ashfield

WHAT WOMEN WANT

Nicky Sapey from District 4, Debbie Reay from District 8 and equalities adviser Lee James were three of 1,200 delegates at the Women's Labour Party conference on Saturday. They joined shadow cabinet members, MPs, PPCs, councillors and trade union activists to discuss, frankly, what women in Britain want. The day was led by women but Ed Miliband took time to pledge that gender equality is essential and he won't rest until 50% of MPs and councillors are female.

Harriet Harman, deputy leader, tackled head on the controversy surrounding all-female short lists, explaining that, while no one likes them, they are essential as nothing else has worked to correct the gender imbalance in parliament. Even today, in the Parliamentary Labour Party, men outnumber women 2:1.

Gloria de Piero, Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities, spoke about women's disengagement from the political process. One woman on the doorstep told her PMQs is just 'Jeremy Kyle with posh people.'

'We will not stop till Britain is a fairer place and women are equal to men.' – **Harriet Harman**, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and MP for Camberwell & Peckham

It's time to be big, brave and bold, Ed

Mick Whelan, speaking at a packed rally for rail public ownership in the LabourList marquee on Sunday afternoon, got a rapturous reception when he laid out the case for a publicly-run, publicly-accountable,

railway fit for the 21st century.

Mick was one of several platform speakers – including Manuel Cortes, general secretary of the TSSA; Katy Clark, Labour MP for North Ayrshire and

Arran; and former Shadow Secretary of State for Transport Maria Eagle – who called on the next Labour government to be big, to be brave, and to be bold, in a bid to restructure not just the railway but the economy of this country.

As Mick pointed out: 'It's a vote winner. Bringing the railways back into public ownership is popular, in poll after



Mick on message in the LabourList marquee

poll, with Conservative as well as Labour voters.'

'Manchester is the most wonderful city of modern times,' wrote **Benjamin Disraeli** in *Coningsby*.

Austerity means the people pay

Gary Wareing told a Labour Representation Committee meeting that the financial crisis caused by the banking crash in 2008 has still not been resolved. 'The government's answer has been to introduce austerity, with budget cuts and job losses resulting in the lowering of living standards of working people,' he said. 'Austerity means the people pay.'

Gary was speaking alongside Jeremy Corbyn, Labour MP for Islington North; John McDonnell, Labour MP for Hayes & Harlington; and the author, activist and newspaper columnist Owen Jones in the Cross Street Chapel on Monday night.

He said that neither Ed Balls nor Chuka Umunna had gone far enough in their policy announcements. 'We want real increases in the minimum wage, the end to fees for employment tribunals, and the end of zero hours contracts.'

Simon's speech creates a storm on Twitter

Simon Weller fought off a streaming cold to speak for the union at the Stand up for Palestine fringe meeting at the Arora Hotel on Sunday evening. Palestine, generally, and Gaza, in particular, were hot contemporary topics at conference and Simon brought the audience to its feet with a passionate speech which steered clear of some of the more familiar tropes by

talking about the Jerusalem Light Railway, and offering an industry perspective, with particular insights into what, in this country, we can do to alleviate the plight of the Palestinians.

For his pains

Simon was bitterly attacked by Luke Akehurst, a right-wing Labour councillor, leading light in Labour Friends of Israel, and central cog in the wheel of Progress. EC member Dave Calfe launched an instant rebuttal, pointing out that Akehurst, a self-regarding Twitter bore, was wide of the mark in his claims.

'Ed Miliband, a decent man, is putting himself on the side of working people who deserve a better deal,' wrote Kevin Maguire in the *Daily Mirror*.

THE NEW PRECARIAT

Mick Whelan made a passionate plea for the Labour Party to work with the trade unions to bring back job security in place of the job insecurity which the Conservatives, and their coalition colleagues the Liberal Democrats, have foisted on the working people of this country. Mick was speaking at a Unions 21 fringe meeting called Creating the Good Work Economy at the People's History Museum on, appropriately, the Left Bank, just off Deansgate, on Monday night.

He said: 'We need to look at things afresh if we want to move away from boom and bust. We have to move away from the race to the bottom. And we have to move away from artificial self-employment.'

Mick referred to the precariat – a play on precarious and proletariat – made popular



recently by Guy Standing, economics professor at Bath University, but first coined, in English, by Noam Chomsky and, in French, by Pierre Bourdieu.

'We need security and protection and the essentials of life. The coalition has created a new social class, the precariat, of people with no job security and no job protection who can't afford the essentials of life. It's not about ideology. It's about what is morally right. The UK is one of the richest countries in the world. Yet it is also one of the most unequal countries in the western world. How can we allow that?'

One trick pony

'UKIP are a one trick pony,' said Mick Whelan. They only talk about immigration. They don't talk about creating social housing. They don't talk about giving our young people the skill sets they need to get employment. They don't talk about making sure people



have proper jobs – secure jobs, permanent jobs – rather than short-term or zero hours contracts.'

Mick was speaking on a platform with Jon Cruddas, Labour MP for Dagenham & Rainham and the man leading Labour's

policy review; Ruth Smeeth, Labour's PPC for Stoke on Trent North; Nick Lowles, founder of Hope Not Hate; Polly Billington, Labour's PPC for Thurrock; and Helen Pearce, head of campaigns at TULO, at a Hope Not Hate fringe meeting at Monday lunchtime.

'They used to be Tories,' said Polly. 'Now they're more Tory than the Tories.'

Off message

● **THE MIRROR** party has, for years, been the high point of the social calendar of the Labour Party conference. It has, in the past, been held in the ballroom of one of the grander hotels in whichever city the conference caravan has turned up to pitch its tent. But under Lloyd Embley, the *Mirror's* editor-in-chief, Peter Willis (editor, weekdays) and Alison Phillips (editor, weekends) a sharper approach is evident. Which is why, on Tuesday night, the good, the bad and the ugly of the progressive left in Britain (as well as a few unreconstructed Blairites) made their way to the hallowed cobbles of Coronation Street. Or, to be strictly accurate, the old Granada TV set just off Deansgate in the heart of Manchester. It was a joy to behold shadow cabinet ministers such as Chuka Umunna and hardened hacks such as Nick Ferrari (the taxi drivers' favourite turn on LBC) posing for selfies in front of the Rovers Return, Angela Eagle 'doing a Bet Lynch' in a sparkly top, and Tom Watson, Dave Prentis and Frances O'Grady queuing for a late night hot dog.

● **DELEGATES** were angry that Labour continues to use the controversial company G4S to provide security at conference. Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods pointed out that G4S 'is integrally involved in the Israeli prison system, where Palestinians, including many children, are illegally detained and G4S guards were found by the coroner to have unlawfully killed Jimmy Mubenga during his deportation'. The company has been criticised by the Home Affairs Select Committee for the appalling conditions in which it keeps people seeking asylum and is, of course, under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office for charging taxpayers for electronically tagging people who turned out to be dead.

● **MARY CREAGH** raised a laugh at a packed Action for Rail fringe on Sunday when, as the panel introduced themselves, she followed 'Mick Cash, acting general secretary, RMT' and 'Mick Whelan, general secretary, ASLEF' with: 'Mary, not Mick, Shadow Secretary of State for Transport...'

● **PROGRESS**, the magazine and 'party within a party' of the Blairite rump on the right, argued at its fringe meetings that the left 'must choose between purity and pragmatism.' Which, decoded, means to go into the general election with a manifesto promising 'we can manage the market better than the Tories.' A dangerous and damaging strategy when the left is arguing that Labour must offer a positive and plausible alternative or be beaten in May.

● **STEWART JACKSON**, the right-wing Tory MP for Peterborough, who regards same sex marriage as an affront to his personal and political sensibilities, caused much hilarity in Manchester when, back in London, he urged the Prime Minister to 'circle the wagons and show the right some man love.'

● **ED MILIBAND's** minders promised 'No more bacon booty moments' between now and the general election.

● **ONE LABOUR MP** with a literary bent – and we will spare his blushes – was heard heading off to the bar at the Midland, site of much plotting and gossiping during conference, citing a line from Byron's satirical epic *Don Juan*, Canto II, stanza XXXIX: "Tis never too late to be wholly wreck'd."

Give the north the railway it deserves

ASLEF has signed up to the Right Track North charter drawn up by the Campaign for Better Transport to tackle the great north-south divide on the railway in Britain. The charter calls for people, communities and the economy in the north to have the high quality rail network they deserve. This is what it means in practice...

THE government is consulting on the future of railways in the north of England. But Stephen Joseph, chief executive of the Campaign for Better Transport, fears the consultation is focused on cutting costs and raising fares rather than on providing proper investment to ensure a better service, in the short term, and, in the medium term, to increase revenue.

'Rail services in the north are well below the standards in other parts of the country – leaving passengers dissatisfied and the potential for growth unmet,' says Stephen. 'We welcome the investment that the government has already committed, to the Northern Hub and electrification. This has made a start in improving the network but much more is needed if the north-south divide is to be narrowed. We want the Department for Transport to use the refranchising of Northern Rail and TransPennine Express to make further major strategic investments in the quality and capacity of the rail network in the north.'

Only through such investment, he believes, can costs and subsidy be reduced. 'Such investment will have wider economic benefits and is essential if the region is to take full advantage of investments such as HS2 and the prospect of faster east-west connectivity in future.'

In practice this means:

NEW TRAINS to replace decrepit 30-year-old diesels and upgrades to others. The existing trains drag down the region in performance and image. New franchises should include a clear timetable for replacing older rolling stock and upgrading the rest to meet basic standards of comfort, reliability,

information, accessibility and cleanliness.

BETTER STATIONS Many lack basic facilities, are unattractive for users and are not contributing to the local community and economy as they could. New franchises should include investment in stations so all have covered waiting areas, real time information and help points.

There needs to be a major programme of accessibility improvements. And more stations should be upgraded and redeveloped as gateways or hubs for the communities they serve.

BETTER CUSTOMER SERVICE There should be sufficient staff on trains and at stations to collect revenue, help people and give passengers security.

BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY Franchises should include a passengers' charter with the right to be sold the cheapest ticket for any journey on the railway network in the north. Part-time workers should be offered flexible season tickets, initially through monthly carnets and later through smart cards.

TACKLING OVERCROWDING The railways in northern England have seen huge growth in usage over the past few years and overcrowding is a major problem on many parts of the network; on some lines worse than in the south-east of England. The new franchises should include investment in more trains as well as replacing and upgrading existing ones, with standards for maximum passenger numbers and the maximum time passengers should expect to stand.

FASTER AND MORE RELIABLE JOURNEYS Journey times between northern cities are far



Greenfield station near Oldham, Greater Manchester (top); a Northern Rail train at Thornaby, North Yorkshire (above); and crowded platforms (above right)



slower than those in the south. Improving journey times and reliability will attract more passengers and cut costs by making better use of rolling stock. The government should commit to invest in rail infrastructure – including a rolling programme of electrification – to bring down journey times and improve reliability for passengers.

INCREASED CAPACITY The Northern Hub is welcome, but with current and expected levels of growth we need a long term programme to increase capacity, and options for future east-west connectivity and a Northern Hub 2 around West Yorkshire. This should take account of the needs of rail freight, which is vital for the region's economy.

SMART TICKETING The north needs the same smart ticketing that London has developed so successfully. The new franchises should be part of a programme to roll out multi-modal smart cards.

BETTER CONNECTIONS The new franchises should include better connections across cities, and the region as a whole, and all parts need good links to HS2.

DOOR TO DOOR There should be better links to, and integration with, other modes of public and private transport – buses, trams, and bicycles as well as cars.

MISSING LINKS Some communities in northern England

are not served by the rail network, and there are 'missing links' which would improve connectivity.

COLLABORATION Many of these objectives can only be delivered by collaboration between the railways, government and local authorities. The experience on Merseyside, where Merseytravel manages the local rail network, is encouraging. The government should aim, over time, to transfer control of the railways in the north to the Rail North group of local authorities, subject to appropriate agreements on governance, finance and risk.

IMPROVING RAIL 'A growing and improving rail network is vital for the future of the north, and for rebalancing the economy of the country as a whole' says Stephen. 'This charter is about giving the north the rail services that will meet future, as well as current, needs, connecting people with jobs and services, giving people choice in how they travel, reducing road congestion and encouraging inward investment. This is not just about the next franchises. We want the government to commit to working with authorities, businesses and communities in the north on a long term programme of investment to give the north the railways it needs and deserves.'

Today we meet friends on the field of battle as enemies



Each month **MICK HOLDER** looks back through the pages of the **Locomotive Journal** to see what we were doing 100 years ago. This month, in an expanded column, he opens the pages of the **Journal** at **October 1914** and a world at war

THE editorial says: 'There are few who would not have shuddered a comparatively short while ago at the thought of a European war. People shuddered because of the horror of it, and no idea conceived, or thought expressed in regard to such horror, can be exaggerated. It has been the proud boast of the civilised nations that, generally, they have sought to develop higher natures of humanity, and the fact that the common people of today enjoy, as rights, what once were considered the privileges of the few, indicates that efforts in this direction have not been altogether unavailing. The ancient habit of regarding the people of other countries as natural enemies, we thought, was surely dying. We recognised German trade unionists – of whom there are such vast numbers – as men whom we regarded not as enemies, but brothers, engaged in the glorious work of ridding the common people of their oppressors – a work that will have to be undertaken with renewed vigour. We have often met them on common platforms as friends, but today we meet them in the field of battle as enemies.'

WIDOWS AND ORPHANS

Comparing the level of financial protection offered by the government to the banks and railway owners against that of war veterans, the editor asks: 'Of what a number of Crimean veterans have we read, dying in the workhouse? It is a crime. Shall we again be guilty? We have some experience of the doles of charity. The recipient generally has a consciousness of the fact that he or she is a burden on society thrust upon him or her. The maimed in battle, the widows and orphans of the fallen, deserve better from their country. In the ordinary industrial



pursuits of life we have, in some measures, brought home the responsibility for death by accidents met in the course of employment. We unhesitatingly declare that the same responsibility, in fuller measure, should be undertaken by the state in the cases of all the victims of war. The glory and honour of having died for one's country will do but little to sustain those who are robbed of the breadwinner.'

PREPARE FOR PEACE

Organising Secretary W Warwick reports: '4 August will ever be remembered as the day on which the government of this country took the plunge into the European war, and the next day I attended, on behalf of our society, a meeting called in the historic No 10 committee room of the House of Commons to consider the position from a Labour point of view on this, the most momentous war that has ever occurred. I sincerely hope and pray that one result will be that workers internationally will so prepare for peace during the war as to make it absolutely impossible for imperialism, Kaiserism, or any other ism to ever bring such a dire calamity upon the world again.'

BESMEARED WITH BLOOD

Organising secretary H Parfitt reports: 'We heard a commotion and from a window we saw a hatless, but otherwise respectably dressed, man rushing up the street; the tails and frock coat were flying in the breeze, and his face was so besmeared with blood that it was impossible to distinguish his features. He was being pursued by a choice collection of Wellington's best so he took refuge in a neighbouring house. We learned that he was a German, who had been in similar difficulties before, on account of his habit – under certain conditions – of speaking

disparagingly of the British race. He had done so on this occasion, but as his audience consisted of some Ketley ironworkers, he got more than he bargained for. His hat was used as a football by both men and women.'

JUSTLY TREATED

Organising secretary J Bromley comments: 'The working-class should see to it this time, that now we are in it, those heroes who have gone to fight in a cause they believe to be just, shall be justly treated at the end. That those dependent on them shall be properly treated by the state in their absence, and when they return, often cripples, they shall not be seen selling laces or matches in a grateful country. And all dishonest army and navy contractors should be lynched.'

UNION SUBS

Mr Parfitt addresses the issue of union subs for those who enlist. 'I note that the executive committees of many societies have decided that, in regard to their members who volunteer or are called up, contributions will not be payable. I think we could go further and make an arrangement under which the contributions of those who serve their country should be paid by those members who remain at their ordinary duties. An arrangement of this kind would maintain the ordinary income of the society.'

THE RED FLAG

'The unfurling of the banner of the Willesden branch was held in a meadow at Roundwood Park. Mr Oxlade's speech and Mr Warwick's speech were received with enthusiasm, and the Willesden Steam Shed Band (composed to a large extent of ASLE&F members) struck up *The Red Flag*, the audience joining in with the spirit.'





Marz and Mick with the Tonbridge crew

Unity is strength

Tonbridge were pleased to welcome general secretary Mick Whelan and Marz Colombini, EC member for District 1, to a packed branch meeting.

Proceedings kicked off with the usual business before the branch secretary presented the proposed design for the branch's banner. Jane Murphy and Emma Dent, from traditional banner

makers Chippenham Designs, were present and the branch voted unanimously to commission the new banner.

Then Mick addressed the branch, providing a thorough state of the nation address, with details of issues currently presenting themselves to the society and those expected to arise over the coming years. Mick placed emphasis on the need for unity and continuing local level and branch activism. Afterwards the GS presented

Steve Rudd with his retirement certificate (we all miss you Steve, please keep in touch); assistant branch secretary Steve Cox with his 10 year badge; forensic roster analyst and long-term swap king Ian Fudger with his 20 year badge; Ray Stone with his 20 year badge; Andy Livermore, Tonbridge's very own Delia Smith, with his 25 year badge; and DCC member Steve Burgess with his 30 year badge.

Then Derek Janes, who started on the footplate at Hither Green as a cleaner, and is well remembered for having served on the Swanley and Maidstone LDC, and then having chaired Orpington branch for 20 years; and Dave Deadman, who rose from junior porter at Streatham Common to respected DI at Victoria eastern via Nine Elms, Waterloo, Addiscombe, and Charing Cross, both received their 50 year medallions. The liquid refreshment – and buffet – were well utilized by the attendees.

**Colin Pratt,
Tonbridge**

Remember Rhondda

District 7 held their council meeting at the Rhondda Heritage Park. We had a guided tour down the pit, although a few decided to stay above ground. We chose this venue to mark the 30th anniversary of the miners' strike, in which ASLEF played a major role, supporting the miners' struggle for jobs and dignity. I would like to thank all the staff at the pit and Ian Thompson (DC secretary and ex-miner) for a successful day.

Trevor Allan

Keele hauled safely

A delegation of ASLEF health & safety representatives – including Paul Blackham from Knottingley, Richard Doran from Lincoln, Nigel Thompson from Wolves and me from District 3 – attended the National Hazards Conference at Keele University in Staffordshire at the end of August. This annual conference is the culmination of many months of planning, led by Hilda Palmer, the leading light in health and safety campaigning, and we were keen to engage with comrades to share information and best practice.

The event opened with a plenary with a number of guest speakers. Ray Rafferty, chair of the Belfast Trust health and safety committee, delivered the goods, saying reps



Paul, Alan, Nigel and Richard at Keele

who think they have nothing more to learn have lost their way. He went down a storm. At the conference I learned a plethora of information about best practice that will be utilised to benefit those it's all about – my membership.

A speech by Trevor Burden, the father of

Upcoming events

RAINHAM – THURSDAY 2 OCTOBER

Southeastern retired members' reunion from 11.00 at Rainham social club, 86 Station Rd, Rainham, Kent.

CRICKLEWOOD – FRIDAY 3 OCTOBER

From 12.00 at the RAFA club, 93 Ashburnham Road, Bedford.

MARYLEBONE – FRIDAY 10 OCTOBER

Anyone associated with Marylebone branch – past or present – is welcome at our annual reunion from 17.00 at the Thornbury. Details from R Gordon-Hill on 07956 025551.

FRATTON – FRIDAY 10 OCTOBER

The second official Fratton train crew reunion is at the Fratton Rail & Social Club from 12.00. Anyone involved over the years with Fratton, Portsmouth, or the Isle of Wight is welcome. Details from Gary White on 07798 706204.

NORWOOD JUNCTION – 15 OCTOBER

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Cowden crash, when two members of Norwood Junction train crew, a Selhurst conductor, and a member of the public tragically lost their lives. We will, as always, be laying flowers at Cowden. We will be travelling on the 10.08 London Bridge to Uckfield service. Afterwards there is a buffet at Selhurst railway club, a short walk from Selhurst station, from 12.30, and all ASLEF members are welcome. Please contact the branch secretary (daniel@dbound.freemove.co.uk) so we know how many will be attending.

SAFETY CRITICAL

Mick Whelan has written to *Penfriend*, the magazine of the Railways Pensions Scheme, regarding an advert which appeared in the Spring/Summer issue. It was placed by the Rail Operation Group seeking to hire retired drivers. 'You may be aware that, as the UK's train drivers' union, ASLEF has a position against retired train drivers working', wrote Mick. 'It is a safety critical job and the union does not believe it is in the best interests of drivers to return to work beyond retirement. This also undermines the pension funds of those drivers who have not yet reached retirement age. We therefore regret your decision to publish the advert from the Rail Operation Group and request a meeting to discuss this further.'

Jason Burden, a marine apprentice from Wearside docks in Sunderland killed because of the negligence of his employer, left the audience visibly moved. It made me more determined to ensure that health & safety is always top of the agenda.

In a series of workshops we had the opportunity to discuss how we address issues, utilise the regulations and keep members informed. There were discussions around promoting health & safety and dispelling the many myths around the subject peddled by those in power.

The conference was a resounding success and all the brothers and sisters who attended left better educated, more confident and better equipped to represent our members.

Alan Moss, Longsight



New Cross Gate branch long service badges presented by Dicky Fisher, District 6 Organiser, to Dave Dhaliwal (35 years); Peter Bacon, Bryan Francis and Will Drage (5). Jim Titchener, New Cross Gate



Peter Castleton celebrated his 80th birthday at a well-attended meeting of our old boys' club. After a few beers, a presentation of an engraved crystal beer tankard was made by former general secretary Lew Adams. Then Peter was presented with a cake in the shape of a tobacco tin provided by John Grant. Special thanks to Richard Fisher, Howard Kaye and Nigel Gibson for their attendance. A day Peter will not forget for a long while.
Dave Pizzie, Retired Members' Section

Livin' La Vida Loca

Ian Hunt's pre-wedding celebrations were full of fancy dress and tomfoolery. Ian turned up as Southern trains' Loco Toledo and, with 14 chums, including nine other Southern staff, jetted off to Madrid for a weekend stag party which included a trip to the Bernabéu stadium to watch Real Madrid. Thankfully, Ian returned in one piece, and is now happily married to Laura. Congratulations to the happy couple from all his



Ian raising a glass with his mates and as superhero La Vida Loco (right)

friends and colleagues at Southern trains.

Paul Eden, Three Bridges



Badges, books and beer

King's Cross branch is promoting three badges and a book to raise funds for its social and welfare club. There is a badge to celebrate 125 years of the branch from 1880-2005 and another to mark the 20th anniversary of the miners' strike of 1984-85 (£5 each); and a limited number of the two depots one branch 'split' badge (£10); as well as copies of *Solidarity Forever: 100 Years of King's Cross* by John Rose (£6.99). Contact branch secretary Richard Sullivan on richard.sullivan7@ntlworld.com



Paint it black

This month is Black History Month, with 6,000 events promoting black history and culture. **LEE JAMES, ASLEF's equalities adviser, looks at the positive contribution black people have made to British society**

If you ask people to name an icon from black history you frequently hear the names of Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, who both made enormous sacrifices for their beliefs. These men should be celebrated but there are figures in British history who, though less well known, should also be remembered.

People like Doreen and Neville Lawrence, parents who fought with dignity and determination a 20 year battle to bring their son's killers to justice while subjected to spying, corruption and racism by the police and criminal justice system to whom they turned for help.

BUS COMPANY BOYCOTT

People like Paul Stephenson and Roy Hackett who led the UK's own bus boycott of the Bristol Omnibus Company. In the early 1960s the company operated a colour bar against employing black or Asian bus crew. After a series of rallies, protests and lobbies, and a media frenzy, the Bristol bus boycott successfully forced the bus company to stop discriminating against black people.

People like Mary Seacole, pioneering nurse and heroine of the Crimean War who, having been turned down by the War Office, funded her own trip to Crimea where she set up the British Hotel to care for soldiers and earned a reputation to rival that of Florence Nightingale.

WORK OF THE UNION

Black History Month provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the history of the British trade union movement. Bill Morris, general secretary of the Transport & General Workers' Union, has been the only black leader of a union in the last 180 years. The only other BEM members to hold senior posts are Colin Moses, national chair of the Prison Officers' Association, and Mohammad Taj, president of the TUC. As union membership is slightly higher in ethnic minority communities you might have thought more would have progressed through the ranks. District 8 Organiser Finn Brennan and BEM representative committee member Trevor Robinson have organised an ASLEF event to celebrate Black History Month and will be using it as a springboard to engage BEM members with the work of the union.

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ERIC GOSNEY ROCKING WITH BILL HALEY AND THE COMETS

It is with much sadness that I report the death of a much respected retired member of Farnham branch. Eric Gosney was born into a railway family at Portsmouth on 5 September 1934. His dad, Sid, started on the railway in 1917 at Ash and Eric joined as an engine cleaner at Fratton in 1949. He transferred to Nine Elms for a fireman's job and, on 5 February 1957, worked a special train from Southampton to London with none other than rocking Bill Haley and the Comets on board. So it's fair to say that Eric was, at least partly, responsible for bringing rock'n'roll to Great Britain!

Eric got his driver's job at Horsham but always wanted to go on the western division of Southern, so did a three way swap with Don Payne of Dorking central and Bonar Law of Dorking western to move depot. He switched to Dorking western and, when that depot closed, moved to Farnham in 1982. He took Alan Stenning's job (Fireball) but, unfortunately, that put Eric on the opposite shift he had always worked on, so he changed shifts with me in 1984.

Eric became a minder driver, forerunner to driver instructor today, and was renowned for his gentle driving, especially on the approach to the buffer blocks at Waterloo. By the time he eventually came to a stop most of his passengers were at their place of work and probably on their second cup of coffee!

In April 1997 when the driver's grade on South West Trains was restructured, Eric opted to retire and so, with a heavy heart, hung up his driver's



Eric: a true gentleman of the railway

cap and chucked in his EP key. In retirement Eric enjoyed 'grand days out' with his railway mates, the monthly meetings of the Old Southeronians at Woking staff club and, especially, the annual reunion of the Nine Elms enginemen on the Bluebell railway.

Eric loved his life on the railway, and all his railway mates, and he would not hesitate to help anyone out with a changeover of duties, or run a train down to Alton and back. He was assistant branch secretary for many years at Farnham. Shaun McCallion, our health and safety rep, summed him up as 'a true gentleman of the railway.'

Steve West, Farnham branch

WT 'DANNY' HUGHES NEVER GOT LOST

Sad to report the death of WT Hughes, who was born in Birmingham in 1936. Whilst still a youngster, his family moved to North Shields where, in his own time, he would help the farmers deliver milk to the local community. With another move, to Darlington, his father found employment at the North Road locomotive works, and he became a painter and decorator before moving to the railway himself as an engine cleaner.

Progressing through the line of promotion Danny, as he was known to everyone, became involved in trade union activities and held many key positions in ASLEF locally including chairman and secretary of the branch alongside the redoubtable Joe Kidd, a long standing LDC representative.

Danny had an eclectic mix of interests and hobbies away from work including travelling far and wide with his wife Val, who could always rely on him to never get lost, no matter how obscure the location. Danny was the proud owner of several generations of Airedale terriers and not only had a collection of model traction engines but would frequently visit the real thing at rallies. He would also travel miles to listen to one of his favourites – James Last and his Orchestra. Farewell to a character who clearly wanted to help people from a young age and never lost the trait.

John Clark, Doncaster branch

ARTHUR TOMBLESON TUMBLE

Sad to report that Arthur John 'Tumble' Tombleson died at the end of May, aged 85. He began his career with the LNER at Heaton Mersey in Stockport in 1943. He transferred to Cambridge, where he worked out of Liverpool Street, where he was hauling a stopping train up the bank to Bethnal Green.

No matter how hard his driver tried to move ahead of the passenger train running parallel, the old steamer was flat out, so they had no alternative but to watch the lady of the night and her client!

He moved back up north to Gorton, then Reddish electric depot, by which time he had driven steam, diesel locos, diesel multiple units, and DC electric locos.

When Reddish closed he went to Newton Heath, then Manchester Victoria, before finishing in 1992 on AC traction at Longsight. I once obtained an Eastern appendix and tested him on the boat train route from Manchester to Harwich – couldn't fault him!

Mel Thorley, Longsight (retired)

RON EDWARDS FULL CIRCLE

Ron Edwards of Birmingham New Street branch passed away on 6 July after losing his battle with illness. He was 73. Ron started his career, aged 15, as a cleaner at Tyseley depot on 11 February 1957, moving on to Saltley when the old Tyseley closed in 1968. On 4 October 1993 he moved to New Street with the passenger work and life took him full circle, back to Tyseley, as a shunt driver when he experienced bad health towards the end of his railway career. Ron often had his head buried in a book and, like most railwaymen, enjoyed a pint or two! Ron was a member of ASLEF all his working career, and into retirement, clocking up 58 years of membership! He is survived by his wife Pat and his two children Mark and Gail.

Martin Bromage-Griffiths, Birmingham New Street

PAT WALLACE LIFE ON THE LICKEY



Pat with his memoirs

On the day the September *Journal* came out with my book review of *Life on the Lickey* by Pat Wallace, fellow retired Westbury driver Mick Richardson and I were at Redditch crematorium paying our last respects to Pat, who had a fall and, as a result, sadly passed on. Pat's passing means that signed copies are no longer available but you can still get *Life on the Lickey* from Ian Tipper, who helped Pat with the book, and he would be pleased to write a personal dedication. Send a cheque for £12.95, which includes p&p, made payable to David Wallace, with your dedication and return address, to Ian Tipper, 3 East Park Drive, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire, WR9 9HG.

Phil Marshman, retired member



We welcome letters, either by email to journal@aslef.org.uk or by Royal Mail to **ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN**. Each month the writer of our **star letter** wins a rich range of ASLEF regalia.

Overtime on Underground

Bro Hardesty's response (*Journal*, September) to my comprehensive letter on the above subject seems to deny reality. When the facts go against him he feels 'bullied'. How he got the job is 'immaterial'. Even after many facts he claims his 'question remains unanswered' yet he does not address even one of mine. He states that all the 'manager grades earn more'. Does he live in a bubble? Could he name any sector, job or country on this planet where staff earn more than their managers on salary?

LUL are recruiting 12 drivers per week giving jobs to the 750 booking office staff who are losing theirs. Him wanting to work overtime would be at the expense of an existing pool driver's job and these ticket office 'colleagues' that Bro Hardesty is so concerned about!

He sees 'no evidence'. Has he not heard of mathematics or market forces? To give him a simple example, so he can understand it, if 100 people work 40 hours a week (equalling 4,000 hours) to provide the timetable, would he deny that if they only had 80 people who then worked an additional 600 hours overtime on top of the 3,200 basic, they wouldn't need the 20? Is this a simple enough answer for him?

He needs to get out of his cab, take his educational qualifications, if any, down the job centre, and have a look at the real world. If he wants to earn more money like

BEWARE THE POLITICIAN WHO SUGGESTS A NO STRIKE CLAUSE

I do not know what the politicians will concoct in their manifestos but banning strikes always seems a difficult one to me.

Firstly, my understanding is that there has to be an alternative in place to settle disputes and that is usually defined as binding arbitration. Arbitration committees often favour the workforce so strike bans seem less attractive in that light.

Secondly, and on a darker note, we all have to consider our own

consciences and ask where we would stand if we were instructed, for example, to transport an ethnic or religious minority to an extermination camp. There is historical evidence that train drivers can be placed in this situation. Refusal may cost us our own lives, and let us hope it never happens again, but these two facts are invaluable when debating no strike clauses with idiot politicians, as I have done in the past.

Rob McMillan, Stoke on Trent

engineering, test train, or managers, why doesn't he seek promotion to them, instead of trying to put other people out of work?
Steve Grant ex-DO 2000-2012

When the carrot is dangled

I agree with Bro John Hardesty on the issue of voluntary overtime. Our reps are always very vociferous against it, both ASLEF and RMT, but these same reps are always working when the carrot is dangled in front of them. Let's have a bit of common sense in these hard times.

Darren Powers, District line, Barking

Thank you, Brothers

I would like to thank Graham Morris and Southern DFC for all their help in getting my job back. I would also like to say a massive thank you to all the depots that also voted for action in support of me; I was deeply touched. And a massive thanks to all my friends and colleagues for your support, without which I don't think I would have got through this horrible period in my life.

My brave daughter Eleanor contracted meningitis when she was eight, which led to complications, including endocarditis, which severely damaged her heart. After six cardio bypass operations she needed a heart transplant.

We were very fortunate that she received a new heart but she had complications and we nearly lost her on several occasions. I had trouble sleeping and my health

deteriorated as a consequence. I was then given 12 weeks' notice. But, thanks to ASLEF, and the support of my colleagues, I am now back driving, with my health issues behind me, and looking forward to extending my 27 years of service. A big thank you to you all.

Mark Taylor, Three Bridges

Major changes

I would like to sincerely thank all my supporters in the recent election for the executive committee member for District 7. I would also like to pass on my fraternal regards to the candidates who participated in the election but were not successful, especially Bro Bryan Davies who ran a principled and honest campaign but narrowly missed out in the second ballot for the position.

The district is about to go through major changes around electrification, infrastructure and, in some cases, TOC harmonisation which, coupled with wider challenges like the threat over pension reform and the introduction of new technology, makes organising in the coming months particularly challenging. The only way to overcome these challenges is by better communication and participation by all members at branch, company and national levels and I sincerely hope to progress these aims whilst on the executive. I look forward to working with the district organiser, Brian Corbett, and all the candidates, representatives and members in the district.

Andrew Hudd, EC member, District 7

SPEAK TO A REP

I'd like to say a big thank you to Leeds secretary Pauline Cawood for all her help in a recent serious issue I had at work. The potential consequences for my driving career did not bear thinking about but Pauline's time, expertise, and overall help really made all the difference. I'd urge every member to always speak to a rep before speaking to management, no matter how small or trivial they feel the incident to be.

Danny Edon, Leeds branch

Speedway and socialism

I really enjoyed the Clem Beckett article (*Journal*, September). A very interesting story, and brilliant to see speedway and socialism brought together like that. Although perhaps not so surprising, as speedway has always had a very working-class following and has always been a sport of the people.

Your opening description of the sport is spot on. I'm off to ponder if speedway's latest star, Tai Woffinden, could ever be such a hero as Clem...

Chris Nutty, project worker, ASLEF education

Won't get fooled again

In reply to Ali Hussein's star letter in the September *Journal* (funny how the star letter always seems to be from someone who tows the party line rather than has the temerity to have their own opinion) I understand the use and reasons for the political fund, thank you, so it is you who 'missed the point' of my letter.

I also know that a small percentage goes to the Labour Party, which is the part I object to. Spending money on lobbyists is fine by me, but giving it to such a discredited bunch of people in order to get themselves re-elected to claim for a second house, when they live closer to London than the commuters we move, or duck houses and bath plugs, is not for me.

Bro Hussein is right. Mrs Thatcher was anti-union. She did introduce plenty of legislation against us, and the latest lot is trying to do the same, against worker employment rights. However, the shower you give your money to repealed none of these 'draconian laws' (as they are always referred to) when in office. Indeed, they bailed out the banks, all but bankrupted the country, robbed our pensions, scrapped the 10p tax bracket and lowered the top threshold so we pay 40%, the same as millionaires.

Nick Clegg claims everything good that comes out of the coalition is down to him and all the bad is Tory! Nothing to do with him, university fees at £9k, or the Royal Mail sold by Vince Cable at the price suggested by the investors buying the shares. If any Scots are feeling smug, don't forget Alex Salmond was at RBS when they were buying up the world, then it went down the toilet. And you think he can run your country?

How do we fund campaigns, Bro Hussein asks? Easy! Introduce an ASLEF campaign fund, and have the party contribution separate. Mick Whelan told me after the meeting at our branch it was a good idea. Perhaps Bro Hussein would like to spend his time putting it through his branch rather than writing ill-informed letters to the *Journal*?

GOING BACK TO THE FUTURE

Having thought long and hard about leaving the ASLEF political fund, I opened the September *Journal* to discover someone highlighting the same issues as those that had me reaching for the exit. Thank you, Andrew Milner, for saying what some of us are thinking, which is that ASLEF should spend its time working with whichever political party is in power to make things better for all of us. It's incredibly rare for me to feel I want to offer my opinion but I would like to give my support and agreement before

others write in to castigate your thoughts. I'm also tired of the harking on about Margaret Thatcher and what happened before – I'm not a fan but she was in power before I was even born so I can't claim much against her! Of course history is important but let's look forward instead of continually going back to whinge about what happened before. I agree and support ASLEF's priorities on this field; just please leave the past where it belongs. To the future!

Chris Smith, FCC, King's Cross

An interesting book you all might like to read (free on Kindle) is *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* by Robert Tressell which tells the tale of the ruling class keeping the workers in their place, and getting ever richer, while the poor starve, and the stupid workers keep voting for the same, rather than say 'enough!' Sound familiar? As *The Who* once sang, 'Meet the new boss, same as the old boss'. Don't get fooled again.

Phill Amies, Bletchley

Rock on, Tosh

I've just read Tosh McDonald's article in the September edition of the *Journal*, and it's one of the best things I've seen in there in years. The story of the rise of a trade unionist with good people to show him the way. It's definitely inspired me. Most definitely an article for a trade union course.

One thing though, Tosh – your BR ID photo has the look of a serial killer! Excellent, comrade.

Alan Moss, Longsight rep

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Golden handshakes, ghost links and stars – the day that firemen became second men



BILL DAVIES of the Retired Members' Section, Bedford branch, reflects on the historic manning agreement we reached with British Rail in 1965

THIS year, after 49 years, the last remaining footplatemen who benefited from the 1965 manning agreement are retiring in 2014. Applicable from the 25 October 1965, this incredible agreement came into place awarding a 'star' to all who had started before this date, which not only ensured future employment, but protected your earnings as well. Historically, it was one of the finest agreements ever signed by ASLEF to protect members in the line of promotion.

In essence, firemen would no longer be required on the new traction, then replacing steam, although it was not until August 1968 that this form of traction was finally phased out, with one notable exception, in the Vale of Rhaidol.

The agreement we reached provided arrangements for the displaced fireman to accompany his driver on his rostered turn or, if he was required for other duties, to receive payment for that turn, whichever was the greater. At some depots firemen who were disadvantaged financially by being removed from their turn were then covered in the form of a ghost link which identified what their turn of duty would have been, with the appropriate payment.

GOLDEN HANDSHAKE

At that time firemen, now regraded as second men, were still required on many passenger turns to operate the steam heating boiler which began to be replaced by ETH in the early 1970s, although Southern had ETH locos well before that date. Further duties included double

manning on night turns and when a driver could not be shown a PNB on his diagram.

To help alleviate the problem, by assisting promotion, the golden handshake was introduced at many depots. Men who had started their career during the First World War and had nearly reached retirement were only too pleased to receive an additional lump sum to go a little early.

Against this, of course, was the contraction of our railway system brought about by the Beeching report which not only closed lines but closed depots as well. Again, PT&R arrangements in place ensured that it was possible to retain a job on the footplate, very often within your own area, although in remote outposts this was not always possible. Amazingly, the second man brought his previous protected earnings with him or, if the new depot paid more, then they got that; the best of both worlds! In rare cases they fared better than the drivers with whom they transferred...

SELLING YOUR STAR

Once management got tired of the payments being made to 'starred' men they offered initially £250, later increased to £320, as an inducement for them not only to leave the industry with a premium payment but, if you wanted to stay, you could take the chance of selling your 'star', thus losing your entitlement to the manning agreement.

At depots such as King's Cross, where I was a second man during the early 1970s, a star was essential to maintain high mileage payments on ETH diagrams. Even so, enough boiler



Bill Davies saw how British Railways changed in 1965; a fact reflected by a brand new image to announce its brave new world

work was still in operation to ensure that even non-starred men still got out on the main and so earned their payment.

What would have happened if this agreement had not been signed? Well, obviously, many experienced firemen who had many years of footplate work would have been made redundant and left the industry, starving the railway industry of future drivers. Would drivers receive extra payment for single manning? Looking back, the offers were derisory, just as the initial offers for Driver Only Operation were.

GREAT ACHIEVEMENT

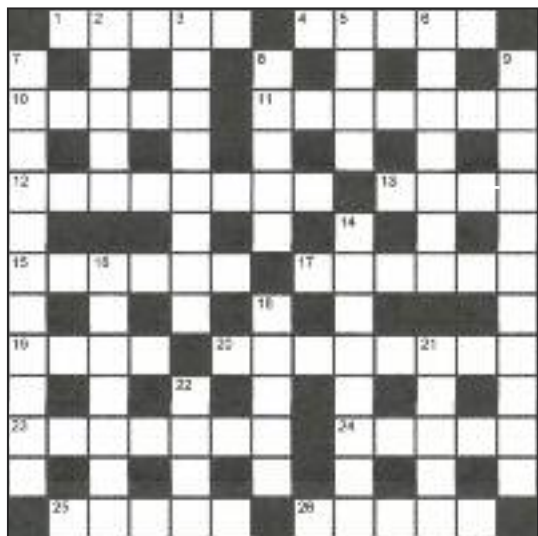
So, all in all, this was a magnificent achievement by ASLEF, allowing me and many others to survive in the railway industry until we reached the ultimate opportunity to become drivers without losing

our jobs or our income.

Therefore it came as a surprise to me, in 1984, having been a driver for more than a decade, as secretary of Bedford LDC, to be called upon to create a ghost link for six second men transferring in on redundancy after the closure of Wellingborough depot. To refresh myself, and our supervisors, we went to Crewe to remind ourselves how it was done! Only Crewe, Carlisle and Nottingham retained ghost links by this stage.

Without this historic agreement, which took protection of employees to a new level, I would never have had the opportunity to have remained in the industry which I loved throughout my varied career. Again, ASLEF was to the fore in protecting its members in the face of adversity – as ASLEF always has and ASLEF always will.

Prize Crossword number 102 by Zebedee



Solution to prize crossword number 101 which appeared in the September edition of the *ASLEF Journal*

Across: 1 Hansom 5 Bract 9 Abeam 10 Rarebit 12 Coda 13 Mythical 16 Belly 17 Harem 20 Astatine 22 Icky 24 Keyhole 26 Inner 27 Plump 28 Reckon

Down: 2 Amendment 3 Some 4 Martyr 6 Rye 7 China 8 Dance 11 Reheat 14 Crescendo 15 Blotto 18 Endear 19 Myrrh 21 Shell 23 RISC 25 Hem

Congratulations to **Peter Griffiths** of **Rayleigh, Essex** who was last month's winner.

Across

- 1 Highly flavoured (5)
4 Slap (5)
10 Fragrance of our new espresso coffee (5)
11 Mistake in the garden? (7)
12 Not brilliantly lit, but clean (8)
13 One to get upset over a trifle (4)
15 Unsuitable person (6)
17 Pointed beard (6)
19 Citrus fruit (4)
20 A loud, confused noise

from many sources (8)

- 23 Patent (7)
24 Pinny (5)
25 Underground vault (5)
26 Royal (5)

Down

- 2 Snapshot (5)
3 Man of the cloth (8)
5 Satellite (4)
6 Fertiliser (7)
7 Type of sweet (11)
8 Maltreat (5)
9 Theatrical make-up (11)
14 Live in (8)

16 Tea urn (7)

- 18 Twelve dozen (5)
21 The main distributor of material vital to everyone (5)
22 Ceremonial splendour (4)



The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

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Thanks for all your responses to the 101st ASLEF crossword in the September edition. If you successfully complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, *ASLEF Journal*, 77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN by 14 October

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MANAGEMENT
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